TL 1227

REPORT OF INDONESIAN ASSAULT AGAINST XANANA GUSMAO

According to a source in Indonesia, the Indonesian armed forces made a concerted assault on Xanana's base on November 14, 1990. Following is the story as related to this source:

On about 10 November 1990, there were Indonesian army units patrolling the Central Region around the border between Kabupaten Ainaro and Kabupaten Same looking for Xanana. In Desa Surulau they arrested a woman with a baby and interrogated her.

Under pressure, she told them where Xanana was - on a mountain nearby. They eventually spotted him with binoculars sitting on a rock reading and with documents spread out in the sun to dry.

The army was excited and sent a telegram to both the military commander in Dili and to Try Sutrisno in Jakarta calling for reinforcements. Some say that Try dashed there to watch the operation, which the army called Operasi Senyum (Operation Smile), because they were so confident that they had him.

The Indonesian battle order apparently consisted of 12 battalions comprising army and paratroopers. They had 4 helicopters as well. Meanwhile, the night before the attack, Xanana slipped away, leaving behind a decoy group of seven fighters armed with light weapons and one large machine gun (light artillery gun). They were under the command of Joao Bosco.

The attack took place on 14 November 1990 by land and air. They say about 100 of the paratroopers were picked off as they floated to earth and the land troops met some resistance from the artillery fire. But it was no match, and the Fretilin gunner was killed. The Indonesian military captured a case with all of Xanana's documents in it, a video camera and a typewriter. Among the documents were letters from the Pope, from Belo, from Carrascalao and from various pastors.

Xanana's escape infuriated the military, who are now redoubling their efforts to round up all clandestine fighters and are arresting former prisoners and all black-listed people.

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